



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

---

*Le Mémoire de Mahelot, Laurent et d'autres Décorateurs.* Publié par  
H. C. LANCASTER. Paris: Champion, 1920. Pp. 147.

All students of the French drama will be grateful to Professor Lancaster for the publication of this valuable monograph. During the seventeenth century the stage decorators of the Hôtel de Bourgogne (and then of the Comédie Française) kept a written account of the plays performed on its stage and of the various "properties" used for such plays. This account, of which the first "complete" edition lies before us, is called the *Mémoire de Laurent Mahelot et de Michel Laurent*, in honor of the only two collaborators of the manuscript whose names we know. The manuscript itself contains the titles of 268 plays, the stage setting and costuming for 192 of these, and drawings illustrating the scenery of 47 out of the 192. The importance of such a document is obvious; as Lancaster observes: "Sans elle on est exposé à regarder le théâtre de Corneille et de Racine d'un point de vue livresque, un peu comme les critiques de la Renaissance ont compris le théâtre grec." Henceforth there will be no excuse for this rather frequent mistake; the Classical French drama owes its successful dramaturgic form not only to Aristotelian "rules" but also, and perhaps primarily, to the practical exigencies of the stage. This has long been the theory of Rigal, a theory which the *Mémoire* enables Lancaster to corroborate.

In an excellent Introduction (pp. 7-33), Lancaster gives the main facts concerning the authors of the *Mémoire*, the periods in the history of the drama which it covers, and the significance of the scenery and settings which it describes.

The bulk of the manuscript is by three persons, of whom the first and the third are respectively Mahelot and Laurent. Mahelot begins the "account" with a record of the years 1633-34, so fruitful in the production of plays (p. 71). Having determined these dates for the first collaborator, Lancaster points out incidentally that the *Mélite* mentioned by Mahelot is not the well-known comedy by Corneille but a tragi-comedy by Rampalle, entitled *Bélinde* (1630), in which there is a *Mélite* whom Mahelot took for the title heroine. The interesting fact, however, is that Mahelot gives the list of plays which were then in the repertory of the Hôtel de Bourgogne, many of which had not yet been printed. Thus Lancaster is able to date for this period the following plays: Durval's *Agarite*, Beys' *Céline* and *Jaloux sans sujet*, Rayssiguier's *Calerie*, Benserade's *Heureuse Constance*, and Rotrou's

*Amélie*. Further, it becomes clear that a given theater had the exclusive right to a play until it was to be printed.

The second collaborator on the *Mémoire* gives no descriptions of plays; he is anonymous and confines himself to a list of seventy-one titles, belonging, as Lancaster shows, to the years 1646–47. But this list shows us that the early, irregular plays of Rotrou, Scudéry, and Du Ryer were no longer being performed, while the more regular drama, including Corneille, Mairêt, the *Visionnaires* of Desmaretz, and the *Ménechmes* of Rotrou, was now in vogue.

Laurent, the third collaborator, begins with forty-nine descriptions, belonging to January–November, 1678, and these are followed by seventy-five additional descriptions, some by himself and some by other unknown persons. The outstanding feature of this section is the mention of plays given at the Hôtel de la Rue Guénégaud after the union of its troupe, in 1680, with that of the Hôtel de Bourgogne (the Comédie Française). Thus the *Mémoire* has in reality four parts, of which Lancaster gives a convenient tabular view on page 32.

It is clear that the first and third parts of the *Mémoire* have the greatest general interest. The first, which contains the forty-nine facsimile illustrations of the *Mémoire*, gives us a clear idea of the multiplex stage-setting, so well adapted to the romanesque tragi-comedy that forms the link between the medieval drama and the plays of Corneille, Racine, and Molière. While the third part is devoid of such illustrations, the descriptions it gives show just where the “unities” triumphed and where not; and in the case of the *Cid*, for example, instead of the simultaneous representation of four localities, as in 1636 or 1637, the directions for the stage now read: “[Le] théâtre est une chambre à 4 porte[s]. Il faut un fauteuil(le) pour le Roy.” Thus, with the *Mémoire* in hand, the student should be able to reconstruct, in its main outlines, the history of the Classical stage.

The more significant points in that history are brought by Lancaster himself (pp. 33–45). In the first place, it is shown that in the beginning the Hôtel de Bourgogne had a stage surrounded symmetrically by an average of five “compartments” (the number varied from three to seven.) As it was frequently impossible for an actor to be heard in the particular compartment in which his action was placed, the general practice was that he emerged from his compartment and stepped into the center of the stage (left vacant for this purpose) where all of the spectators could hear him. To produce a simplification, Mahelot had indicated two methods, realized by his successors, especially by Laurent. Either the stage-manager made use of so-called *fermes* by hiding a compartment beneath a curtain representing a change-of-scene (see *Calerie*, mentioned above), or he eliminated all compartments except one, which was sufficiently enlarged to occupy the entire stage. Hence it happens that the *Cocher supposé*, played in 1684, still has the stage

direction that "une ferme s'ouvre pour faire voir la chambre," whereas, at the same time, most of the successors of Mahelot employ a single *tableau*, often in the form of the *palais à volonté* as exemplified by Corneille.

The second important point made by Lancaster is that the unified *tableau* came to the French largely from the ancients, through the medium of the Italian Pastoral. Mairet, a practical writer, had imitated the Italians. Doubtless, the critics, especially Chapelain, were also a strong influence for dramatic unity. But it was mainly the representation of regular plays, written in direct imitation of ancient and Italian models, that led to the simplification in question. We must agree with Lancaster that the "unities," powerful as they were, never held complete sway: the *Comte d'Essex*, a tragedy by Thomas Corneille in 1678, still calls for changes of scenery. On the other hand, the tendency was toward simplification, and Lancaster might fittingly have mentioned the preoccupation the elder Corneille reveals in his early *Examens* as to the unity of place—a preoccupation which again may have been due to practical stage considerations.

Unfortunately there is no room to dwell here on the many other matters—costuming, individual properties, artistic qualities—upon which the *Mémoire* throws light. Suffice it to add that Professor Lancaster's edition is a model (in everything except binding) of what such an edition should be. The text is clearly and accurately printed, the Introduction and the Notes are adequate and to the point, and the arrangement of the volume makes it handy for reference. The material aspect of the book owes much to its progressive French publisher, M. Champion, who has thus again shown his interest in the products of American scholarship.

WILLIAM A. NITZE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

---

*Forschungen zur Artusepik: I. Ivainstudien.* By RUDOLPH ZENKER.

(Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, No. 70.)

Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1921. Pp. viii+356.

The value of attempting a critical appraisal of so important a question as the origin of the *Ivain* is self-evident. Where conflicting views abound it is especially worth while to take stock, particularly when the reviewer is as gracious and open-minded a person as Professor Zenker. But the present volume is more than a mere survey. It is divided into three clear-cut parts: (1) a complete bibliography; (2) a discussion of the various theories as to the source of the Old French poem; and (3) an attempt to settle the relationship of the *Ivain* to the Welsh *Owain*. In this last part of his study Zenker agrees with A. C. L. Brown (*Romanic Review*, III) that the two works were derived from a common source, now lost; but he reaches